

E. Recreation, Parks and Open Space

Recreation and Parks

The Orange County Recreation and Parks Master Plan (also known as the Recreation Element of the Orange County Comprehensive Plan) was adopted in July 1988. The Plan called for the development of a community park within Efland by 2008. A community park provides recreational opportunities for the entire family and contains areas suited for intense recreational purposes such as athletic fields, tennis courts, and paths for walking/jogging. In addition, community parks usually contain outdoor areas for passive recreation such as picnicking, nature viewing, and sitting.

Construction of Efland-Cheeks Park & Community Center was completed in phases. Phase I construction began in 1999 and was completed in 2000. Phase II began in 2004 and was completed in April 2006. The park is located on Richmond Road just north of Highway 70 and offers indoor meeting space, a catering kitchen, a small stage, lighted outdoor basketball courts, a picnic shelter, a walking track, a ball field, picnic tables, BBQ grills, a playground, and a soccer field.

The Park Master Plan also calls for a District Park to be located in Cheeks Township. A district park is typically at least 75-acres in size and serves a population with a 30-minute trip range. District parks usually contain the same types of uses as a community park but typically include added amenities, such as a water feature, an expanded number of playing fields, and an indoor recreation building. The 1988 Parks Master Plan identified a preferred location for a district park east of the planning area at Corporation Lake and identified an alternative site as the general area around the proposed Seven Mile Creek Reservoir, which is located southeast of the planning area. While the Plan mentions these specific locations, the practice of parkland acquisition over the past 17 years has been to acquire and site district parks less-specifically in the general area of the “bubbles” on the Parks Plan map.

Since 1988, several actions have occurred which may serve to make the Seven Mile Creek area the preferred location for a “split-site” district park. The McGowan Creek Preserve was acquired by the County in 2000 and is intended primarily for use as a preserve with low-impact recreation provided by way of a nature trail. McGowan Creek Preserve is located in the vicinity of Corporation Lake. The Seven Mile Creek Nature Preserve has been acquired over time; several parcels were acquired in the 1970s, two parcels were acquired in 2001, and additional parcels are being negotiated and are expected to be acquired in the future. The preserve will largely serve to protect important identified Natural Heritage sites but will also contain public access areas, which will likely feature low-impact recreation uses such as a primitive campsite and nature trail. In 2004, the County acquired land on West Ten Road adjacent to the new Middle School site for use as a Soccer Center. The Soccer Center and Seven Mile Creek Nature Preserve are both located on the south side of Interstate 40/85 in relatively close proximity to each other. The County’s Department of Environment & Resource Conservation (ERCDC), which is responsible for coordinating the planning, acquisition and design of parks and open spaces, is recommending

that the Cheeks District Park proposed in the Plan be considered to be a “split-site” park. The West Ten Soccer Center will serve as the “active” component of the district park and the Seven Mile Creek Nature Preserve Public Access Area(s) will serve as the “low-impact” component. The two components can eventually be linked by a bike path and/or walking trail.

A new Orange County Middle School, to be named “Gravelly Hill Middle School,” is currently under construction on West Ten Road. The school site will contain various ball fields, athletic fields, and a track which will be accessible to the general public during non-school hours. Construction of the school is scheduled for completion in 2006. Orange County is developing a soccer center on approximately 30 acres adjacent to the Middle School site. The soccer center is proposed to contain six (6) soccer fields and a concessions area. The site has been graded and funding is available to construct up to two fields. Future funding for the full facility will have to be secured. Construction of the field(s) for which funding is available will likely begin in late 2006.

Lake Michael Park is owned and operated by the City of Mebane. It is located in Orange County on Lebanon Road immediately adjacent to the northwest portion of the planning area. The park contains over 200 acres with a 59-acre fishing lake that has two piers and small boat access. There are also nature trails, picnic areas, paddleboat and johnboat rentals, pontoon boat rides, overnight group camping, sand volleyball, tot areas, three large covered shelters, and one small covered shelter. The park is open from mid-March until the end of October.

Additional recreation opportunities in the planning area include the Efland Ruritan Club facilities (ball fields, small walking track, meeting buildings) and Cobb Field, a privately owned ball field. Duke Forest also owns property accessible to the public for hiking east of the planning area.

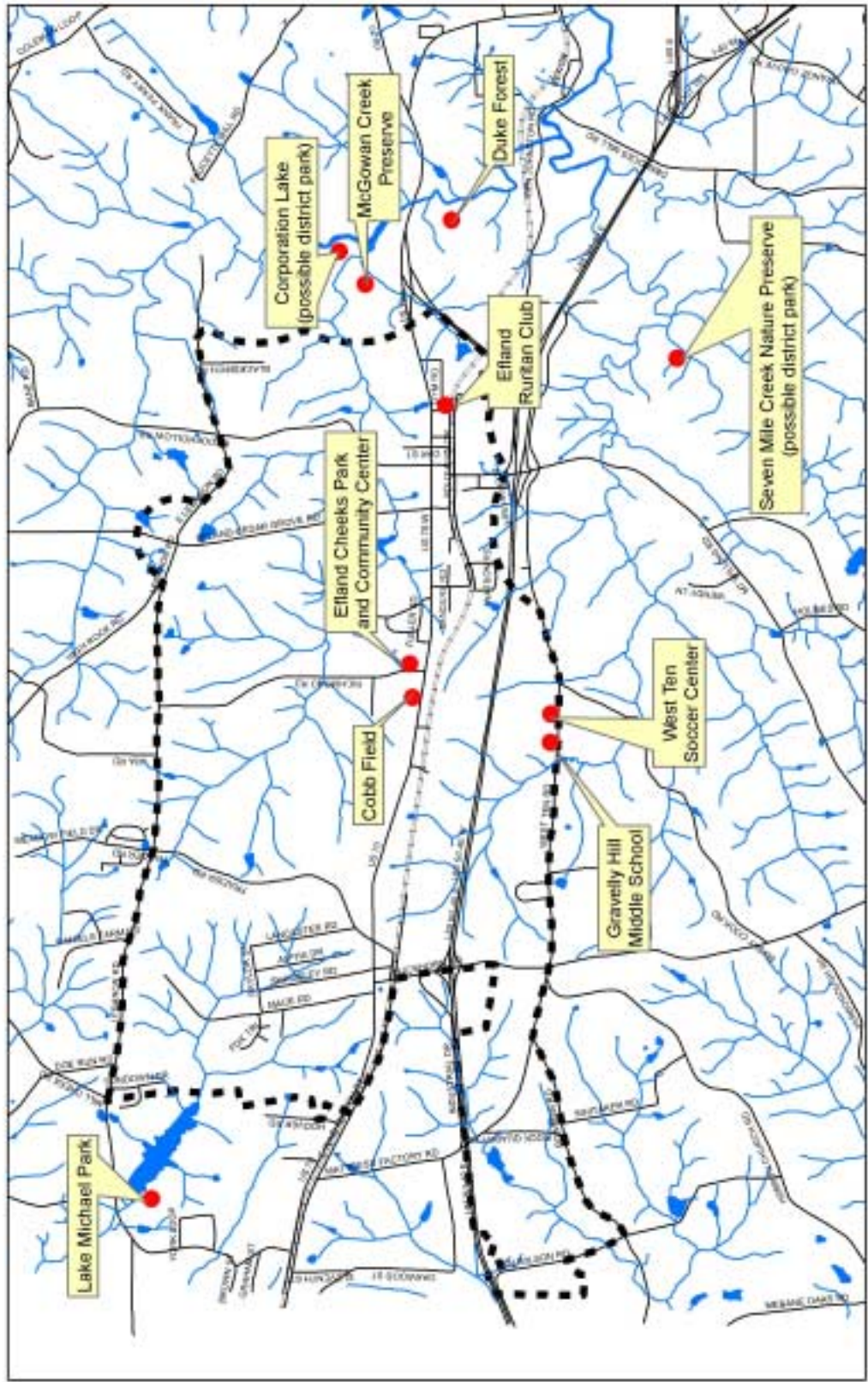
Map 16 shows the locations of existing and proposed recreation and park facilities.

Open Space

Private Open Space has been required as part of the development approval process of subdivisions platted in the recent past. The Existing Land Use Map on page 44 shows Private Open Space parcels.

As shown on the present Future Land Use Map on page 51, the planning area contains Resource Protection areas which are located predominantly adjacent to streams. Given the farming and forestry nature of large portions of the planning area, open space has not historically been a significant issue in the area. However, as the planning area develops, maintaining areas in open space will become increasingly important.

Efland Small Area Plan - Parks and Recreation



Orange County Planning and Inspections Department
 GIS Map Prepared by Milans Coates March 10, 2008
 Projection: North Carolina State Plane (NAD83)
 Datum: North American 1983

- Legend**
- Small Area Plan Boundary
 - Park and Recreation Locations



Source: Orange County Planning Department